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WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

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BF&M revision receives strong support

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP, Special, and local reports) — After a year of speculation about proposed changes to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Baptist Faith & Message statement (BF&M) — and only a few weeks to study the final proposal — debate on the floor of the convention's annual meeting June 14 focused on the relative authority of Jesus and the Bible.

The recommendations of a study committee appointed by SBC President Paige Patterson were overwhelmingly approved by convention messengers who soundly defeated three attempted amendments.

SBC registration secretary Lee Porter later estimated that the proposed changes received about 90% approval on a show of ballots vote.

Leading Baptist moderates and conservatives alike agreed afterward that the debate clearly defined the tensions that have gripped the SBC over the last 20 years. The moment was, in this sense, the culmination of the battle for the Bible launched in Houston in 1979, critics and supporters agreed.

From one perspective, supporters believe Southern Baptists have cemented their conviction that the Bible is the supreme revelation of God and Jesus Christ. From another perspective, critics believe the SBC has elevated the Bible to be more sacred and authoritative than Jesus.

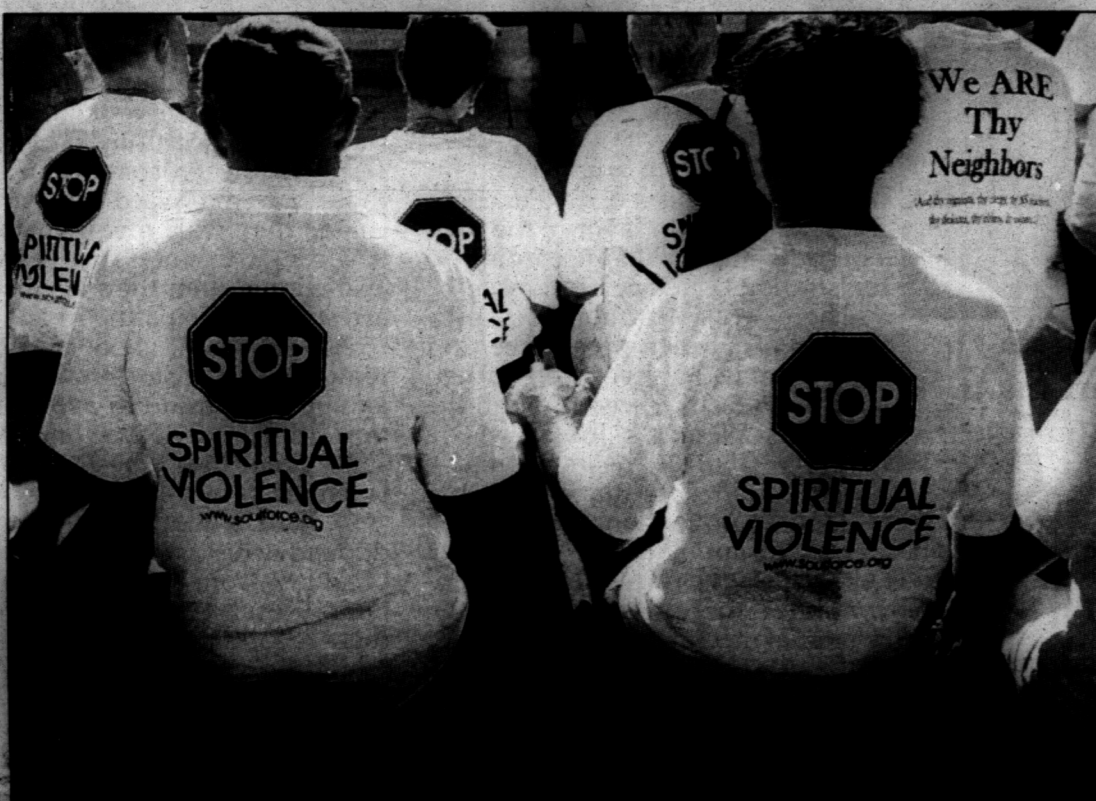
"Ladies and gentlemen, this is what it all comes down to. The issue is whether the Bible is the word of God or merely a record of God's word," said Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and member of the BF&M committee.

He was responding to a motion from the floor by Anthony Sizemore of Floydada, Texas, who attempted to restore the section on Scripture to its 1963 language rather than the language proposed by the study committee. Sizemore and others argued that the committee's proposed changes elevated the Bible above Jesus.

There have been two previous BF&M versions, the first in 1925 and the other in 1963.

Sizemore's amendment was soundly rejected by messengers, as was an earlier amendment proposed by Charles Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, who suggested restoring two paragraphs from the preamble to the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message.

The BF&M committee had begun the session by offering an additional two sen-



IN PROTEST — Members of the group protesting the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) stance on homosexuality kneel and join hands June 14 as they prepare to be arrested outside the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. Meanwhile, messengers to the 2000 SBC annual meeting inside the convention center voted to adopt language in the revised Baptist Faith and Message that clearly states the denomination's opposition to the homosexual lifestyle. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

tences to the preamble inserting the words "soul competency" and "priesthood of believers" but noting that these liberties should be tempered by "our accountability to each other under the word of God."

Also during the hour-long presenta-

denomination in the '60s," listening to the floor debate about the relative merits of Jesus versus the Bible should have dispelled those doubts, he said.

Mohler agreed: "There are two different visions of Baptist life and the Baptist faith."

MBC head comments on BF&M

In a statement issued after messengers to the 2000 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Orlando voted overwhelmingly on June 14 to approve a proposed revision to the Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M), Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) President Kermit McGregor reminded the state's Baptists to remain focused on the greater mission of Christianity.

"As I have reviewed the articles of the BF&M, our adopted mandate is still to be obedient to The Great Commission as stated in Matt. 28:18-20. While some believers may differ on the most effective structure or practical strategies, our goal must ever remain true to Scripture — to win the lost to Christ and disciple them as commanded," McGregor said.

He also stressed that Southern Baptists have, from the beginning, constituted themselves so that the local church was always at the top of the organizational chart.

"We must be reminded that no matter how strongly we feel about a confession of faith, doctrinal statement, or practical deduction, no personal or professional document of expression is a binding directive to distinctive congregations.

"The visible, baptized, body of believers makes decisions under the Lordship of Jesus Christ with no dictation from any hierarchal or ecclesiastical group," he cautioned.

McGregor also expressed disappointment that Mississippi Baptists were overlooked when members of the BF&M study committee were appointed last year by then-SBC President Paige Patterson.

"Historically, Mississippi Baptist theologians and pastors have been requested to contribute to solutions to controversial issues that have periodically surfaced. It is regretful that no Mississippians were asked to served on the committee that reported the BF&M in Orlando," he said.

When the original 1925 BF&M was revised in 1963, the late W. Douglas Hudgins of Jackson served on the committee. Hudgins was pastor of First Church, Jackson, at the time, and later served as statistical secretary (now titled executive director-treasurer) for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

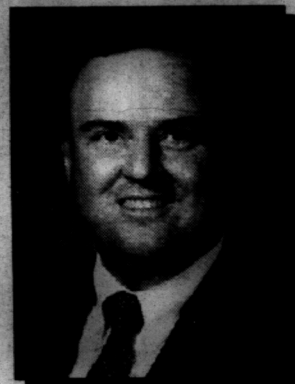
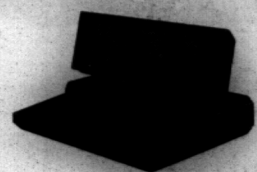
tion and debate on the BF&M revisions, messengers rejected an amendment offered by Jim Goodroe of Sumter, S.C. Goodroe wanted to amend Article 7 on baptism and the Lord's Supper.

To the surprise of many people who had followed the debate since the proposed revision was released in mid-May, the section prohibiting women from serving as pastors garnered no comment from the convention floor. Secular news media had focused heavily on that issue.

Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Seminary and a member of the BF&M study committee, said the debate formed a "magnificent textbook illustration of why we had a denominational struggle."

"If anyone had any doubt about whether a new stream of theology began entering our

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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Starting the new millennium with a bang

Southern Baptists kicked off a new millennium of annual meetings with quite a bang when they gathered in Orlando June 13-14.

There was drama — homosexual protesters being arrested as they marched toward the Orange County Convention Center where the convention was taking place.

There was farce — preacher/politician/part-time Southern Baptist Jerry Falwell formally calling for the defeat of specific candidates during his appearance on For Faith and Family, a radio program produced by the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC).

There was suspense — an hour-long debate on the proposed revision of the Baptist Faith and Message, the non-creedal but foundational document that defines what we believe as Southern Baptists.

The fate of the revision was never in doubt, as it turned out. The messenger vote in favor of the revision was about 90%, according to registration secretary Lee Porter.

There was emotion — testimonies of former prostitutes and drug users whose lives were turned around by Jesus Christ through the Christian Women's Job Corps, a ministry of the Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention.

There was disappointment — at just over 11,600 registered messengers, attendance continues to fall each year even when the annual meetings are held in what could confidently be considered as population centers for Southern Baptists.

The same attendance problems also plague many state convention and associational meetings. What a shame.

There was inspiration — passionate preaching and moving musical presentations that were surely sweet sounds in the ears of God.

There were quite a few interesting sidebars to the meeting, including the highly-anticipated homosexual protest march.

In the weeks prior to the march, supporters giddily predicted more than 2,000 protesters would show up. Their count was slightly off the mark; less than 50 people lined up for the across-the-street walk to the convention center.

Protesters loitered in the air-conditioned lobby of the nearby Omni Rosen Hotel until organizers called for the march to begin. Clad in special T-shirts that read, "Stop Spiritual Violence" on the back, participants knelt for a few minutes outside the hotel and quietly sang, "We Shall Overcome," while the crush of news media personnel took advantage of the photo opportunity.

When the protesters finally began their march toward the convention center, they were met by a contingent of Orange County sheriff's deputies and warned that they were subject to arrest for participating in an illegal event.

At that point, about half the protesters removed their "Stop the Violence" T-shirts and stepped aside to avoid the confrontation. "I'm not getting arrested for this," said one of the protesters standing on the sidelines.

A little while later, the protesters who dodged arrest were seen enjoying a hearty breakfast from the luxurious buffet at the Omni Rosen Hotel — once again sporting their "Stop Spiritual Violence" T-shirts — while their cohorts sat handcuffed in the rear of police vans.

So much for martyrdom for the cause.

Strange as it seems, there are lessons in that story for Christians — the main one being whatever we do and wherever we go, let us be real about our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us not profess undying allegiance

"LORD, SHOW ME HOW
TO DIE TO SELF, TO LOSE
MYSELF IN THEE — WHILE
AT THE SAME BECOMING
WELL-KNOWN AND ELECTED TO
HIGH DENOMINATIONAL OFFICE!"



and then melt timidly into the crowd when the going gets tough. Let us not depend on other Christians to pay the price while we cower on the sidelines.

Let us not be seen later enjoying the fruits of the culture that would oppress our cohorts.

Also, let us keep in mind that what appears to be a huge movement in the limited view offered by a television screen can in reality be a tiny group of half-hearted zealots who know how to work the news media.

That was certainly the case with the Orlando protesters.

Most of all, though, let us never forget the unchanging purpose of our most important mission, which is to do everything we can to help bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus.

Everything else pales in comparison.

A PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE:

One grateful pastor

By Carl M. White, Associate Editor



Four years ago this month Bill Causey called me, followed quickly by a call from William Perkins. They wanted me to leave a church I loved and join them at the Baptist Building as associate editor of The Baptist Record.

Few things in life have surprised me more than that offer. All I have ever wanted to do since I was a high school student at Parkway Church in Jackson was to pastor a local Baptist church. Four years of college and the first three years of seminary were all about preparing for this calling. I managed to squeeze a three-year doctoral program into five years just so I could be a better pastor. The idea of doing anything else had rarely entered my mind.

Have you ever noticed how some things in life seem to have destiny written across them? This did. I sought the face of the Lord, and late on a Sunday evening I experienced his presence in a meaningful way. My question was, "Lord, are you calling me to The Baptist Record?" His answer to me that Sunday night might surprise you. It certainly surprised me. His response was, "You will have my blessings if that is what you choose." I felt God gave me

the option, and I took it.

While missing the pastorate from day one, I never regretted the decision. For the past four years I have traveled from Memphis to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Mississippi River to foothills of the Smokey Mountains chasing news stories, human interest stories, preaching in churches, and associations, leading Lift the Church weekends, or just stopping to visit with pastors and directors of missions.

I attended briefings and meetings at various Southern Baptist Convention agencies and interviewed many of the leaders of denominational life. I got a press pass to the annual convention, went back stage, sat in the newsroom at press conferences, and met so many interesting people. My files are bulging with letters from Christian men

and women all across the spectrum of denominational life. Almost every one has been positive, even when there was an area of disagreement. It has been a great adventure.

William Perkins and I had several goals. We wanted to reposition the paper so that all Mississippi Baptists felt they could trust it and would want it in their churches. We wanted to improve the quality of the paper, both its written content and its appearance.

We wanted to join the technological revolution, adding digital cameras, laptop computers, and use of the Internet. We wanted to add color.

Though enjoying almost every day, there was an empty spot in my life. I missed the ongoing conversation with a local body of believers that is the pastorate. So, last fall I came

to the conclusion that I had done all I could do toward the goals we set. I tired of being the interim pastor of some really fine churches and then having to give that church up. I longed to once again to be known as a pastor, not a journalist.

On Mother's Day, after many months of praying and talking, I accepted the call of Highland Church, Meridian, to be their pastor. Today is my last day at The Baptist Record. This is my last column.

I have a few things left to say. Thank you, Mississippi Baptists, for the opportunity to carry forward God's call through the pages of this great paper.

Thank you to all my friends in the Baptist Building, especially those on the second floor.

Thank you, William Perkins, for being a great editor. (Let me let you readers in on a little secret: I am an average writer, at best. Good editing makes the difference.) Thanks also for being an understanding supervisor. Most of all, thanks for being a good friend.

Finally, thank you dear Lord for the gift of salvation, and for the privilege of being allowed to be part of your great work.

This is one grateful pastor's final perspective.

Baptists prepare meals for N.M. fire victims

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP) — What would you call a parking lot full of tractor trailers, propane tanks, tables, cooking pots, food containers, Red Cross emergency response vehicles, and lots of people with yellow hats scurrying about? Some might say the cooking site of the Top of Texas disaster-relief team looks like chaos, but those in the know say, "Welcome."

The parking lot behind Holcomb Auditorium at the Glorieta conference center was a virtual beehive of activity May 17. For example, volunteers from the unit based in Plains and others from the Permian Basin unit from

Odessa, Texas, prepared dinner for fire fighters and evacuees of the massive Cerro Grande Fire that ripped through Los Alamos one week earlier.

The Texas Baptists planned to stay at least through the weekend to prepare meals for the ongoing relief effort.

It's an impressive sight as everyone does their jobs, which include opening hundreds of cans of food, keeping propane flames lit, stirring large cooking pots, washing dishes, and throwing away trash. No job is more important than another; teamwork is the number one priority.

The Red Cross provided the food and paper goods, and the disaster relief teams, sponsored

by Texas Baptist Men, provided the means and manpower to prepare the meals.

For some of the volunteers, this was their first time to minister during a disaster, but not for Bill Wright, a former pastor of First Church, Anthony, N.M., and now pastor of First Church, Plains, whose disaster relief work has spanned three decades.

Several of the Plains unit volunteers are members of Wright's church, including his wife, Linda, his



REFRESHING RELIEF — Kiley Bearden of San Angelo, Texas, marks drink cambros that will be delivered with meals. (BP photo by Cheryl Vaughn).

daughter, Kay, and her husband, Jered Sellers.

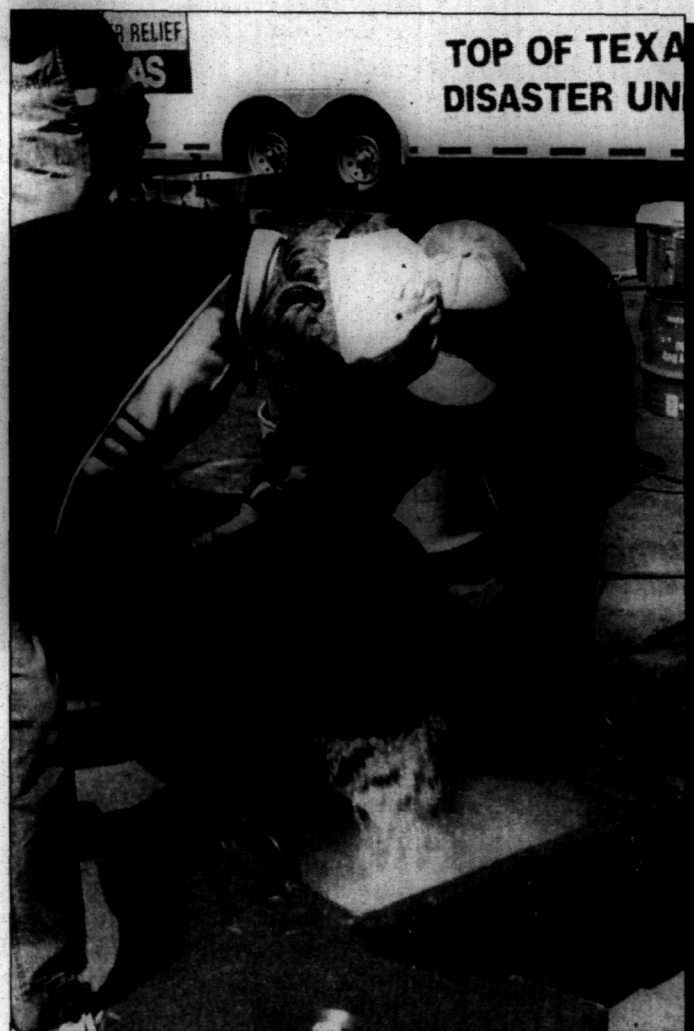
Sellers, the unit's "blue cap," heads up the unit. He spent his youth in Seminole, Texas, where he was baptized by the editor of the Baptist New Mexican, John Loudat, who, at the time, was his pastor at South Seminole Church.

The "blue cap" from the Odessa unit, Alan Harrington, served as the liaison between Sellers and the Red Cross.

Harrington told the volunteers that their main goal is to spread the love of Jesus Christ. They prepare the food with love, package it with more love and then put it in the hands of the Red Cross workers, who transfer it to those waiting for the meals.

After loading the Red Cross ERVs with dinner May 17, Harrington asked the Red Cross site director if he could lead in a word of prayer. The OK was given, and Harrington prayed for the safety of the drivers and staff.

The Baptist volunteers spent much of the afternoon talking about the many opportunities they had to witness to the Red Cross volunteers. They were clearly aware that as they were busy cooking meals they were also planting seeds for Christ.



PASS THE PEAS — Larry Morrow of Plains, Texas, (right) and Bill Kennedy of El Paso, formerly of Santa Fe, pour black-eyed peas into a cambro, which will be transported by the Red Cross to Cerro Grande Fire firefighters for supper. (BP photo by Cheryl Vaughn)

Seminaries launch online study

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) six seminaries have strategized to best meet the needs of 21st century students, their leaders reported to messengers of the SBC June 13-14 annual meeting at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla.

"We have all agreed that the Internet is going to be a fixture of theological education in the future," said New Orleans Seminary President Chuck Kelley Jr. He also is chairman of the SBC's Council of Seminary Presidents.

All six seminaries already are accepting up to 30 hours of online academic credit toward the master of divinity degree, Kelley said. Reporting about developments at New Orleans, Kelley said the seminary will stay at its present location but rebuild the aging and termite-embattled campus.

"The future of the church is an urban one," Kelley said. "The best thing we can do is to use the laboratory of New Orleans to train people how to reach people for Christ."

Kelley said seven competencies have been identified after dialogue with faculty, pastors, and denominational leaders: biblical exposition, Christian theological heritage, disciple-making, interpersonal relationship skills, servant leadership, spiritual, and character formation, and worship leadership.

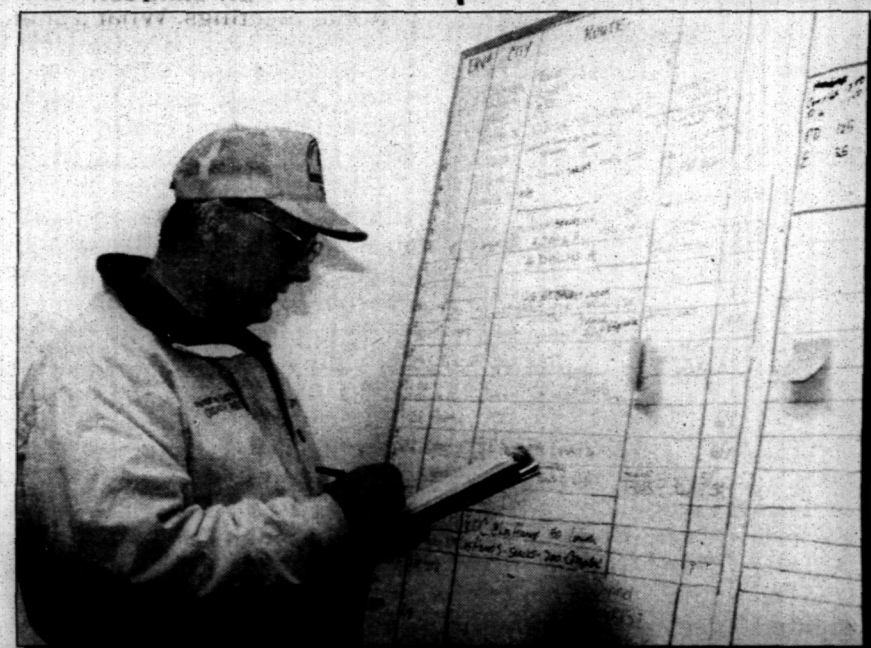
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FRONT PAGE

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Two New Mexico men, Jimmy Boyce of Artesia and Carl Russell of Socorro, saw firsthand how the disaster relief teams work and expressed interest in starting a unit for the state's Baptists.

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Looking back

10 years ago

The annual Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans attracts 38,478 messengers, the third-largest in history. Mississippi native Morris Chapman, pastor of First Church, Wichita Falls, Texas, is elected president.

20 years ago

Herschel Hobbs, who chaired the 1963 committee on the Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M), attempts to amend a resolution exhorting seminaries to only hire those who affirm the infallibility of the Bible, on the grounds of freedom of conscience.

50 years ago

Clifton Perkins resigns the pastorate of Goodman Church to accept the pastorate of First Church, Booneville. Perkins went to Goodman after graduating from Southern Seminary in 1949. He holds the B. D. and Th. M. degrees, and served three years as an army chaplain.

ADDING IT UP — Alan Harrington of Odessa, formerly of Carlsbad, works with Red Cross volunteers in keeping track of the meal count, delivery destinations, and the Red Cross emergency response vehicle in which the meals will go. (BP photo by Cheryl Vaughn)

Lee installed as new WMU exec. director

ORLANDO, Fla. (Special and local) — Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), the Southern Baptist auxiliary for women's missions efforts, turned a new page in its long history June 11 by installing Wanda S. Lee of Georgia as its seventh executive director during the opening session of the 112th WMU annual meeting in Orlando.

ment as a nurse and my husband's role as a church planter."

Calling the position a sacred trust, Lee said, "It is a trust I do not take lightly, but accept only with the confident assurance that as God has led and been faithful in my life before today, he has committed to do the same for me and WMU in all the days before us."

"Together, may all we do for the cause of missions bring honor and glory to the Lord and him alone."

Also during the June 11 evening session, North American Mission Board (NAMB) president Robert E. Reccord and International Mission Board president Jerry Rankin thanked WMU for its efforts in dispelling the darkness throughout the world.

NAMB missionaries told of sharing the gospel from the ski slopes of Aspen, Colo., to Phoenix, Ariz., to New York City.

Rankin said, "Thank you, WMU, for what you do to promote the Lottie Moon Christmas offering, and for discovering a long time ago that missions education, prayer, and personal involvement was needed to dispel the darkness in our world."

Despite the challenges of a modern world, Woman's Missionary Union must not forsake the task of missions education, Wanda Lee insisted during the June 12 morning session.

Making her first annual report as WMU executive director, Lee said, "We can't afford not to call people to accountability for the command of the Great Commission."

To people who question whether WMU is still viable and who say there is no time for missions education, Lee said, "We are the church of Jesus Christ. We are commissioned and called to carry the light of the gospel to a darkened world....We must seek new and different ways to challenge the church to make missions once again a high priority."

WMU members also elected Janet Hoffman of Farmerville, La., as president and Yolanda Calderon of Modesto, Calif., as recording secretary.

Hoffman, 64, succeeds Lee, who was serving as president when elected executive director. Calderon, 58, is the first ethnic leader to hold a national WMU office.

North American Mission Board missionary David Lema, director of Hispanic international ministries for the Miami Baptist Association, kicked off the June 12 afternoon session with a note of appreciation for the role women play in Southern Baptist life.

"Women are the ones who power our missions," Lema said, speaking of the support and prayers women offer for missions work.

NAMB missionary Lynn Latham presented nine graduates of Restoration House of Orlando, a ministry connected with the WMU's Christian Women's Job Corp program, which helps needy women learn to live a Christian life on their own.

The women stood before the crowd, holding in front of their faces reproductions of the unflattering mug shots taken when they were last arrested before joining the Restoration house program.

At Latham's signal, they lowered the photographs from their old, sin-filled lives and revealed the radically changed, shining faces that are part of their new lives as Christians.

Many in the crowd were visibly moved by the stark difference between the old mug shots and the women who stood before them, and they sprang to their feet to give the graduates a standing ovation.

Latham, a 22-year veteran of North American missions, pledged to continue to lead volunteers to Orange Blossom Trail, Orlando's adult entertainment district, to minister to women like the nine Restoration house graduates.

The walls of the room vibrated with exhortations to "keep on keeping on" from speakers in the final session of the WMU meeting on the evening of June 12.

Emmanuel McCall, pastor of Christian Fellowship Church in College Park, Ga., said for years he had a love affair with WMU because in 1957, it produced the first book on racial reconciliation.

The former black church extension director for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (now NAMB) declared, "If one is to grow a strong, healthy mission-minded church, it must have a WMU."

McCall told of being on a mission trip to Liberia. On a rainy night when he could not sleep and there was no electricity, he struggled to find light. He finally located one on a fishing vessel miles away.

"We, too, can become such a beacon of light to the darkened world, because we are equipped with God's grace," McCall concluded. "The glory of God will be revealed to this darkened world because WMU members, who have been called and commissioned by Him and have been faithful to Him all these years, will continue to do so."

Julie Smith, Miss Alabama of 1999, also praised WMU for its role in her life from childhood.

"Through WMU training, I came to realize my responsibility to God was to use my talents and gifts for God," Smith said.

"As Miss Alabama and as a Christian, I have learned that even though people are always watching me, I can represent the Kingdom of God as I use these to make a difference in the lives of others," she said.

John and Anna Ramirez shared how God is dispelling the darkness in Massachusetts and other New England states, and they urged mission teams to go there. In the Boston area, they noted, people from more than 100 nations live.



NEW OFFICERS — Wanda Lee (left), newly installed executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, stands with Janet Hoffman (center), newly elected WMU president, and Yolanda Calderon, newly elected WMU recording secretary, following a June 12 session of the WMU's national annual meeting, held June 11-12 in Orlando's Orange County Convention Center. (Photo by Gibbs Frazeur)

Lee, a registered nurse and former missionary to the Caribbean, had served as national WMU president since 1996.

Also, Mississippi WMU president Rebecca Williams of Gautier was one of four state WMU presidents selected to preside over individual sessions of the meeting. The state WMU presidents serve as national WMU vice-presidents.

In remarks following her installation, Lee dated her call to missions from nursing school 30 years ago. During her time as a missionary, she recalled, "I experienced what I had been learning in WMU."

"As many of you prayed faithfully when my name was on the prayer calendar and as you gave to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, it was translated into our overseas home and into my assign-

BWA: Persecution remains worldwide problem

ORLANDO, Fla. (Special) — Despite increasing openness to religious expression, persecution and other problems remain for Christians in many parts of the world, Baptist leaders reported at a breakfast for Baptist World Alliance (BWA) supporters Orlando June 14.

"The world is moving from one kind of dictatorship to another," declared Paul Negrut, president of the Romanian Baptist Convention and Immanuel Baptist University in Oradea, Romania. Negrut cited three kinds of oppressive systems confronting Christianity — left, right and orthodox — and cited an example.

"If children from (Romanian) Baptist families do not go to orthodox class, they are ridiculed and mocked," Negrut said.

At the same time, Negrut reported the Baptist school he founded with 60 students in 1990 recently became the first accredited Baptist university in Europe.

Negrut reminded the gathering that "God does not lower down his standards in America or Romania. Let's encourage one another in holiness."

Paul Kim, a Korean pastor now serving in Boston, spoke with optimism about reunification talks that began this week between North and South Korea. "God is working in Korea," declared Kim, a trustee of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Kim expressed hope that the historic Korean reunification talks "will open the door for missions in North Korea."

A Baptist leader from reunified Germany described significant growth since the fall of the Berlin Wall. He report-

ed there are currently some 90,000 German Baptists.

The collapse of communism also has presented opportunities for Baptist growth in the former Soviet Union, a Ukrainian Baptist leader reported. He told of a church that began as a prayer meeting in the dacha, or summerhouse, once used by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and added, "We have a freedom now for sharing the gospel."

Mississippi Baptists are currently involved in a partnership missions project with Ukrainians.

The fiery destruction of a church in Manipur, India, last week is among the latest examples of continuing persecution against Asian Christians, an Indian Baptist leader stated. Nevertheless, he added, "That won't stop the ministry we have to do."

Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, noted that for the first time in history, the majority of Christians now live in the non-western world.

"The good news is every year there are six million new Christians in Africa," Lotz said. "The bad news is there are three million fewer Christians in Europe. There is a tremendous paganism spreading over Europe." As a result, he added, "We may have to open ourselves to missionaries from other places. The fact is, if a church is not a missionary church it dies."

Lotz also commented on plans to hold the annual meeting of the BWA General Council in Havana next month. "We're not going there to affirm any government or system," he explained.

"We're going there to affirm Cuban Baptists," Lotz said.

Messengers tackle resolutions at SBC meet

ORLANDO, Fla. (Special) — Adopting a pro-capital punishment statement for the first time in Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) history, messengers to the 2000 SBC annual meeting in Orlando approved a resolution June 14 describing the practice as "a legitimate form of punishment for those guilty of murder or treasonous acts that result in death."

The capital punishment resolution was one of only two resolutions that generated debate among messengers. A proposal focusing on the threat of "New Age globalism" was amended twice before gaining final approval.

Messengers adopted a total of 10 resolutions addressing such diverse issues as religious persecution in Sudan and China, sex trafficking, and the 75th anniversary of the SBC's Cooperative Program unified giving plan.

A resolution decrying "the threat of New Age globalism" expresses concern about promotion of "a one-world government, a one-world religion, and a one-world economy." It warns that the success of such a movement "would mean the destruction of the sovereignty of nations."

Messengers voted to specifically add the president to the list of national leaders who should use their influence to halt the spread of globalism. They also approved an amendment to delete a reference to the biblical account of Nimrod and the tower of Babel as an example of God's opposition to a one-world government.

The resolution opposing religious persecution in Sudan and the People's Republic of China cites last month's first annual report of the Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Condemning "the trafficking of women and children for sexual purposes," a resolution on

that subject reports that "as many as one million women and two million children are trafficked internationally into sexual slavery annually," including more than 50,000 women and children in the U.S.

Declaring opposition to trafficking of human fetal tissue, messengers agreed that "the growing industry of buying and selling human fetal organs, tissues, and cells represents a grisly practice that converts human body parts into a commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace."

Other resolutions adopted without debate include:

- The Cooperative Program's 75th

anniversary. It urges Southern Baptist churches to consider increasing their church budget giving to the CP by one percent during the anniversary year.

- Religious freedom and evangelism in a pluralistic society. Affirming "our God-given and constitutionally protected right to make Christ known in a pluralistic society," the resolution adds that "we abhor the use of coercive techniques, dishonest appeals or any form of deception in evangelistic outreach."

- The "judicial oppression" of the Boy Scouts of America. Responding to a recent New Jersey Supreme Court ruling upholding a homosexual's right to serve as a Scout

leader, the resolution warns that such "judicial imperialism," if allowed to stand, could subject churches and other religious institutions to "an overbearing government intrusion into their right of self-governance."

- Retaining the traditional method of calendar dating. Affirming the historic calendar designations of B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. ("anno Domini"—in the year of the Lord), the statement opposes the designations of B.C.E. (before common era) and C.E. (common era) as examples of "secularization, anti-supernaturalism, religious pluralism and political correctness pervasive in our society."

- Appreciation. The traditional resolution expresses thanks to the host city, Florida Baptists and denominational leaders for work related to the SBC annual meeting.

Youth post TLW commitments



Youth from Rose Hill Church, Ashland, Ky., were among a group of teens who posted 450 True Love Waits yard signs June 13 on the front lawn of Orlando's Orange County Convention Center, site of the Southern Baptist Convention. Participants included (from left) Rachel Routt, 18; Jennifer Harris, 15; Phillip Harris, 19; Holly Routt, 16; and Heather Harris, 6, posted a sign sent in from a youth group at First Church, San Angelo, Texas. True Love Waits is a program promoting sexual abstinence until marriage sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. (Photo by Kent Harville)

BEWARE OF THE DUCKS

The other day I saw a strange sight. I was driving down a four-lane road in town when I observed something in the middle of the road. At first I thought it was debris, maybe tires or something, but I just wasn't sure. As I slowed down and got a little closer, I recognized what it was. There, in the road, were 16 to 18 large, gray Canadian geese. They were not crossing the road, in fact most of them were just sitting in the road. There were two or three walking around, but the majority just sat staring out across a field. In order to get around them, I pulled over to the left of the road and do you know not one of the "sitters" moved.

These geese were not eating and they did not appear to be talking, instead they were just sitting. The direction in which they were looking was interesting because they were only 50 to 75 feet from a lake. These large, winged creatures are quite a sight to see when they are in flight and they are equally beautiful and graceful in the water. But, sitting out in the road or just walking around on



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

the pavement isn't really what they were made for.

As I drove on, watching them in my rearview mirror, they continued to sit and do nothing except look totally out of place.

The final, constructive, imperative words to come from our Lord Jesus just before he left were, "Go into all the world and make disciples." That is what he made us to do. That is where we are supposed to be. That is the environment into which Jesus sends us. Reflecting on my new found geese friends sitting out in the road, I thought about how odd it must appear when Christians interpret the command of Jesus to mean, "once or twice a week go and huddle yourselves in little masses in houses of worship," as though that is the mission he has called us to.

Without a doubt God has designed us and desires us to worship, but worship is not an end unto itself. It is an experience of beginnings, of launchings, and of enlarging of visions. My geese buddies were not doing anything immoral, and they didn't seem to have a rebellious spirit, yet I wondered why they just sat there in the road. Maybe something out in the lake frightened them. Perhaps a snake, an alligator, or some predator drove them to sit on the side of the road. Needless to say, there are times when you and I run into those frightening experiences when we try to penetrate this old, hard, dark world with the love of Jesus. We too may be frightened of feeling intimidated and yet it is then that our Lord says, "I still need you there and I will give you power to go."

Sure, geese can survive. They can get along waddling down a road, sitting and staring into space, but it is really not the purpose for which they were made and it is not the environment in which they thrive. Put them in the water and watch them lift off into the skies above - it is then that they become a majestic sight! When the church of the Lord Jesus Christ hears his command, responds to his call, and mobilizes itself to go and make disciples, it is energized by resources that can only come from Heaven and that church becomes a work of Heaven on earth. It, too, becomes a marvelous and majestic sight!

One final word. It may appear to be self-evident, yet some do not seem to understand that there are dangers in just sitting in the road. Before you get side-swiped or rear-ended on the path of life, why not realize that God has a great plan for your life and allow him to use you in the most effective way. You have a witness to bear, a place to serve, a work to accomplish. Get on with it — right now!

Nominations deadline looming

The Mississippi Baptist Convention's Committee on Nominations is now receiving recommendations for individuals to serve on the boards and commissions of the convention. Bill Duncan, director of missions for Golden Triangle Association in Columbus and chairman of the nominations committee, said a limited number of vacancies will be filled on:

- Board of Ministerial Education
- Christian Action Comm.
- Education Commission
- Historical Commission
- Baptist Children's Village
- Baptist Health Systems, Inc. (Jackson)
- Baptist Memorial Health Care Systems, Inc. (Memphis)
- Blue Mountain College
- Mississippi College
- William Carey College
- Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The Committee on Nominations will work with the heads of the institutions and agencies to compile a list of nominees to be considered by messengers to the 2000 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Oct. 31-Nov. 1 in Jackson.

Nomination forms can be obtained from the office of the executive director-treasurer, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: bbox@mbcb.org.

Nominations must be received at the above post office address by July 1.

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Pitts, Guess, Rogers, Kennedy, and Wells

ous pastors gave personal testimonies. Pictured (from left) are Jerry Pitts; Curtis Guess, pastor of Walnut Grove Church from 1962-67, preached the message; Rogers; Jerry Kennedy; and Dennis Wells, pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

James Elbert Ray Jr., 72, of Ripley, died May 7 at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Oxford.

Funeral services were held on May 9 with burial in Tippah Memorial Park. He was a member of Springdale Church. Ray was a full time volunteer missionary since 1995; Mission Service Corp. coordinator; Brotherhood director in Grenada County; and state coordinator for Campers on



Ray

Walnut Grove Church, Leake Association, honored Frances Rogers on May 28 for a lifetime of dedication service to the Lord. Members of her family provided music and previ-

Mission with the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and Sunday School Board. Survivors include his wife Mattie White Ray, Ripley; sons, Robert K. Ray, Portland, Ore., and Danny White, Grenada; daughter, Nancy Thrasher, Ripley; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Todd Walker

was ordained to the gospel ministry at Bethel Church, Columbus, on May 21. Walker is pastor of Olean Church,



Walker and Butler

Olean, Mo. Pictured with Walker (left) is Walter Butler, pastor of Bethel Church.

BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

Seventy-six years ago Randolph Delk's mother, Mrs. Ella Morgan Delk, encouraged her son to pursue an education. Delk, then just 14, listened to his mother. He went on to earn a BA degree in physics from Mississippi

College in 1931, a master's degree in chemistry from Tulane in 1936, and a law degree from Southern Methodist University in 1953. He offers the same advice to young people today - and he backed up that advice recently

with a gift to William Carey College (WCC) in the amount of \$54,590. Delk's gift will supplement the previously established Buford E. and Ella Morgan Delk Memorial Scholarship Fund. Following a career path which led him from the military to the IRS and ultimately into finance (he is also a CPA), Delk retired to Mississippi from Texas. He now lives in Hattiesburg spending time with his sister, Carmen Simmons. At age 90, Delk enjoys frequent exercise, church, and community activities, and is completing work on a book about his ancestors'

migrations to the Virginia colony and throughout the South. (Left to right) John Stewart, director of development at WCC, is pictured with Delk.

The Hillman Scholarship will be awarded at Mississippi College (MC) for the first time during the 2000-01 academic year and is designed for eligible undergraduate commuter students from the local metropolitan area. For further information, contact MC's office of Enrollment Services at (601) 925-3800 or (800) 738-1236.



Stewart and Delk

Walter McCraw, minister, dies

Walter McCraw of Long Beach, 82, died May 6 in Gulfport. Services were held May 8 in Gulfport. Burial was in Sandtown Cemetery in Philadelphia. A native of Philadelphia, McCraw had been a resident of the coast for 42 years. He was a former pastor of Northward Church, Gulfport, and also pastored churches in Philadelphia and Jones County. McCraw was a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and attended seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and New Orleans, La. Survivors include his wife Catherine Lee McCraw of Long Beach. Memorials may be made to First Baptist Church, Bay St. Louis.

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NORRIS BOOKBINDING COMPANY, INC. Old Bibles rebound. Also church bulletins and hymnals. For more information call 662-453-7424 or fax us at 662-455-6743. Located at 107 North Stone Avenue, Greenwood, MS 38930.

GROUPS CALL KELLER'S COUNTRY DORM RESORT, Eureka Springs, Ark, for excellent seats at The Great Passion Play, plus lodging, recreation, and meals, all for just \$36 each! Details: 1-800-859-8952.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, FOLEY ALA., is seeking a Minister of Music/Activities. Must be an advocate of both traditional and contemporary music. Send resume to: P.O. Box 307, Foley, AL 36536.

HEIDELBERG STAINED GLASS, Meridian. Design, Fabrication, Repair. Fax illustrations to (601) 483-7958 or call 1-800-368-2705.

PRICE HARRIS — MUSIC EVANGELIST Open dates for 2000: Aug. 13; Sept. 24; Nov. 26; Dec. 17, 24. Call 318-687-0384 or 318-347-4370. Web page: www.dcw.net/phea E-mail: Phea2@aol.com. Call about 2001.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION: Silverdale Baptist Church is one of the fastest-growing churches in Tennessee. We are accepting resumes for a full-time minister of education who understands Sunday School, discipleship, and has a heart for outreach. Please send resume to Search Committee, 7236 Bonny Oaks Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37421.

HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR needed for Calvary Christian High School. Must have passion for discipling students. Visit www.CalvaryChristianHigh.org for info. Send resumes to Dr. Max Gessner, 331 Cleveland Street, Clearwater, FL 33755.

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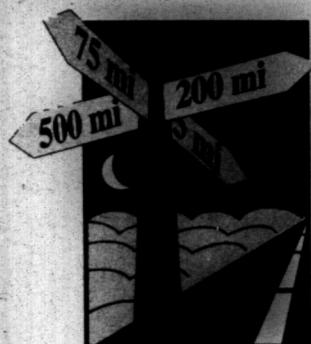
What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

June 22, 2000

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Office of Communication.



VOLUNTEER MISSION REPORT

Remember to send
your report by August 15!
Be sure to include all projects from
August 1999 to August 2000

☐ Church Project ☐ Association Project ☐ Individual Project

Your Church _____

Your Association _____

Project Coordinator _____

Address _____

Phone _____

City _____

Zip _____

Project Information

Type of Project: ☐ Community ☐ In-State ☐ U.S. ☐ Foreign

Project Location (state or country) _____

No. of Volunteers in Your Group _____

Dates _____

Type of Work Accomplished:

☐ Construction

☐ V.B.S.

☐ Survey

☐ Medical/Dental

☐ Evangelism

☐ Bible Clubs

☐ Music

☐ Other _____

Decisions:

Professions of Faith _____

Other _____

Mail to: Volunteer Mission Report, Men's Ministry Department
P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530, 601-968-3800
fax: 601-714-7436, email: jdidlake@mbcb.org

2000 Growing Churches Conference Gulfshore Baptist Assembly

July 27-29

featuring

P I E
Paid In Full

For reservation information, contact Frank Simmons, manager
Gulfshore Baptist Assembly, 100 First Street
Pass Christian, MS 39571-3299
Telephone: (228) 452-7261 Fax: (228) 452-7263

MasterCard and Visa can be used for reservations and payment of bill.
Please call the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department for more info:
(601) 968-3800 or 1-800-748-1651.

2000 WMU TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES CHURCH LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Monday, July 31
Camp Garaywa, Clinton
2:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m. OR
6:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, August 1
Main Street Baptist Church
Hattiesburg
7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Thursday, August 3
First Baptist Church, Newton
7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S JOB CORPS

Site Coordinator Training

July 20-22

Camp Garaywa, Clinton

For registration information, contact Tammy Anderson
WMU Department, MBCB
at 1-800-748-1651 or in Jackson at 292-3323.

Your Invitation to Involvement 2000 ON-TO-COLLEGE EMPHASIS "Discovering New Opportunities"

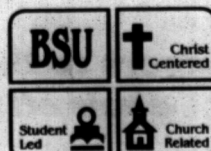
Galatians 6:9-10

GET INVOLVED: ON-TO-COLLEGE DAY

What is it? On-To-College Day recognizes each student as they enter classes in the fall. It is observed on a special Sunday of your choice either in July or early August. Included are all students whether they remain in the community or leave home to attend college, and whether beginning college or a returning student. This emphasis typically includes an On-To-College worship service with an optional luncheon.



For Further Information, Contact:
Collegiate Ministry, MBCB, P.O.
Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530
1-800-748-1651 or (601)968-3800
ext. 299



September Sunday School Training

The Power to Change • The Power of Spiritual Transformation

September 8 and 9

First Baptist Church, Batesville

Guest Speaker: Chuck Pourciau
Pastor, Broadmoor Baptist Church
Shreveport, La.

No pre-registration, no cost, no childcare provided.
Registration begins at 5:30 p.m.

September 15 and 16

First Baptist Church, Madison

Guest Speaker: Lawrence Phipps
Pastor, Vaughn Forest Baptist Church
Montgomery, Ala.

No pre-registration, no cost, no childcare provided.
Registration begins at 5:30 p.m.

Conferences begin at 6:30 on Friday
night and conclude by noon on
Saturday at all three locations.

A detailed listing of faculty and
conferences may be found at
our web site: www.mbc.org/ss.

Conferences offered at all three locations on:

- Preschool, children, youth and adult curriculum and ministry update.
- Curriculum updates and conferences for pastors, Sunday School directors and other general officers.
- Electives for all age groups, including teaching and ministry ideas for small churches.

Additional conferences for smaller churches offered at Batesville and Gulfshore locations.

MISSIONARY KIDS RE-ENTRY RETREAT

WHAT: A four-day retreat for
missionary kids. This retreat is designed to enable
MKs to make a smooth transition from the mission
field to the college campus. This is the first time
Miss. WMU has hosted this national event.

WHEN: August 10-13, 2000

WHERE: Camp Garaywa, Clinton

We Need You!!!

Here are just a few ways that WMU
groups can participate in the MK Re-
Entry Retreat:

- Adopt a Missionary Kid
- Provide School Supplies
- Provide Gift Items • Provide Snacks

For more information please contact Tammy Anderson in
the state WMU office at 1-800-748-1651
or in Jackson, 292-3323.



GROW Your Church Through GIVING

HAVE A ONE-DAY STEWARDSHIP REVIVAL!

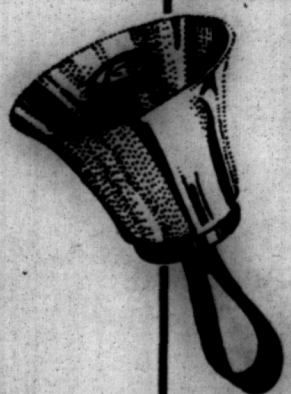
We will provide . . . Sunday School lessons, tracts and materials, lodging
and travel, budget workshop, encouragement, giving profile, honorarium,
and consultant.

CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES

Promote Enlist members Support

A stewardship revival includes preaching, Sunday School lessons,
promotional materials, customized giving profiles, testimonies,
and an analysis of the budget process.

If interested, call the Stewardship Department toll-free 1-800-748-1651
or in Jackson, 292-3347.



HANDBELL SKILLS CLINIC

(for ringers)

Saturday, August 26

Trace Ridge Baptist Church
Ridgeland

Building Handbell Skills for Your Ringers

- Ringing the Bass Bells
- Change Ringing for Middle and Upper Bells
- The Shake, BrushDamp, Ring Touch, and Echo Ring
- Stopped bells skills: Mallets, Martellato, Thumb Damp, and Plucking

**Bring your Ringers to this one day clinic and get your Handbell
choir off to a great start this fall.**

Contact Jerry Talley or the Church Music Department at 601-292-3266 or 1-800-748-1651

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST YOUTH NIGHT '00

Friday Night Only
July 14, 2000
6:30-9:00 p.m.

GREG MATTE
Program Speaker

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Mission Explosion

**August 25-26
Camp Garaywa**

Contact Tammy Anderson, WMU
1-800-748-1651 or 1-601-292-3323

Sunday School Director's Seminar

August 14
First Baptist Church, Greenville
August 17
First Baptist Church, Brookhaven
7-9 p.m.
Pre-registration by August 9
featuring

Larry Garner, author of
"Five Handles for Getting a Grip on
Your Sunday School."

Larry is director of church services for the Metro
Baptist Association. He has written curriculum mate-
rials and articles appearing in numerous magazines.

"It works better when you have a handle!"

In this highly interactive session, Larry Garner will help *you*, the Sunday School director, "get a grip" on your Sunday School. How? It always works better with a handle! The Five Handles are five primary actions that must be in place if you are to have an effective Sunday School. Together these handles make up essential tools for building the Kingdom.

Pre-Registration Form Sunday School Director's Seminar

Name _____
Day Phone Number _____
Mailing Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
I serve as Sunday School Director for _____ Baptist Church,
in _____ Miss.
I will attend the seminar at:
☐ FBC, Greenville
☐ FBC, Brookhaven
Pre-register by Wednesday, August 9, and you will receive, at no charge, a copy of
"Five Handles for Getting a Grip on Your Sunday School" at the conference.

Complete and return to: Sunday School Department, PO Box 530, Jackson MS 39205
You may also register online at www.mbc.org/ss

For more information contact: David Wills, Sunday School Director, dwills@mbcb.org
John Clendinning, General Growth Consultant, jclendinning@mbcb.org
Sunday School Department, 1-800-748-1651, or 968-3800 locally

Pray this day for...

June 23 - July 13, 2000

Prayer Ministry Office • P.O. Box 530 • Jackson, MS 39205-0530 • Phone 968-3800, Ext. 3904 • Mississippi PrayerLine 1-800-787-PRAY

PRAYING WITH OTHERS-

Unified prayer is more powerful than individual prayer. Praying with a prayer partner strengthens your faith, broadens your prayer concerns, and adds a special accountability to your prayer habits.

Adopt An-Annuitant Sunday. Sei Hun Kim is a church planter missionary in Raleigh, N.C. Pray that as they start the first Filipino ministry in North Carolina that they can get a sponsoring church.

Pray that every citizen, especially Christians, will learn all they can about the candidates running for election this year so they can vote intelligently.

Pray for a musically talented Christian young woman as she takes a group of violin players out to several villages in Myanmar. Pray that God will use their Christian music and their testimonies to touch the hearts of all those who come to listen.

For (1) Royal Ambassador/Challenger Camp; Central Hills Retreat, (2) GA Summer Camp, (3) Randy Bennett is an associational missionary in Bakersfield, Calif. Pray for five new missions and the ministry of their pastors.

For (2) Baptist Building STAFF PLANNING WEEK July 3-7, (2) Family Enrichment Conference, (3) GA Summer Camp

For (1) GA Summer Camp, (2) Royal Ambassador/Challenger Camp, (3) Pray for Ghana Baptists as they prepare for their annual meeting in August. They will be selecting leaders to guide them in evangelism, discipleship and intercession.

For (1) HeartSong Youth Music Conference 2000, (2) Pray for all the Vacation Bible Schools that are being held in our churches during June and July. Pray for the workers and all the pupils who attend.

Independence Day - John Adams said, "Independence Day ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty." Thank God for the freedom we enjoy in the United States and pray that we will do all we can to protect it.

A team of volunteer intercessors will prayerwalk soon in a Last Frontier nation where it is illegal to convert to Christianity or to witness to anyone. The team rejoices that no man-made laws can hinder them from praying! Please intercede for the prayer-walking team.

In the Forecariah area of Susu, Guinea, 14 women are being trained to go into the neighborhoods to teach others to read. Literacy training goes hand-in-hand with Bible distribution in this area. Pray that God will open the doors to these ladies and direct them in this ministry.

Missionaries Wes and Pam Jones in Mam, Guatemala, ask for prayer for leadership training opportunities. With only one trained pastor and no Scriptures in the Mam language, oral training needs to be done that oral communicators can understand and reproduce.

Thank you for praying for missionaries Tom and Bunty Miller in Kenya. God has answered your prayers by providing a home for them which seems ideal for both ministry and family needs. Continue praying for them as they get settled in Mombasa.

Pray that Taiwanese families will find Christ. Problem areas are pressures of society, materialism, economic insecurity, gambling, superstition, fear of demons, emptiness of life, ancestor and idol worship, threat of military conflict, disintegrating families, and rebellious youth.

For (1) Older Children's Retreat, (2) Please pray today for President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

For (1) Music Leadership Conference, (2) Pray for the few believing Yemeni Arabs of Yemen that they will be strong in their faith and willing to teach their children about Christ.

For (1) Lad/Dad Weekend Camp, (2) African American Church Leadership Institute, (3) Young Musicians Conference

Sixty-five Buddhists have received Christ at "Salvation Camps" this year and 20 are awaiting baptism. When the pastors requested permission to baptize them, authorities said, "No." Pray that the authorities will reverse their decision. Four different congregations

Missionary Clark Stanley asks you to pray for a couple studying at the seminary in Argentina. The husband and wife are both doctors. This young couple and their two sons are preparing for missionary service in an African country where hardships abound.

Please pray for teenage refugees in the Netherlands as they are transferred to longer-term facilities around the country. They are not strictly supervised in these centers, and many are unaccustomed to these new-found freedoms and are lured into worldly lifestyles.

meet at the Baptist House Center in Jerusalem. The sound system was stolen. Believers began praying. The thief confessed and returned the equipment. Pray the pastor will meet him and help him believe in Jesus the Messiah. Christian Citizenship Sunday.

For (1) Centrifuge, (2) Greg Rowe and his wife, Sara, are US/C-2 missionaries in Jacksonville, Fla. Greg works with criminal justice ministries and Sara works with medical missions. Pray for doors to open for these ministries.

Worship Seminar

August 18, 2000

9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Baptist Building, Jackson

Argile Smith, Professor of Preaching and Worship
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Ev Robertson, Director of Drama
Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn.

For info, please contact the MBCB-Church Music Department

Discipleship and Family Ministries Church Leadership Training

Tuesday, August 1

Main Street Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Thursday, August 3

First Baptist Church, Newton, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Friday-Saturday, August 4-5

Gulfshore North, Growing Churches (Sponsored by Lee Association)

Calvary Baptist Church, Tupelo, Fri. 7-9 p.m., Sat. 8-11:30 a.m.

Training for North Mississippi [call Calvary BC for info: (661)566-1700]

Call the Discipleship and Family Ministries Department for more info: 1-800-748-1651 or 601-968-3800 (in Jackson)

AUGUST



1-91 MR. JESSE BUSH

B.P. 15

Kenieba

MALI

Parents: Karl & Lena, Community Outreach/Enco

6-83 MISS AUDRA FUNDERBURK

01 B.P. 6491

Abijan 01

COTE D'Ivoire (IVORY COAST)

Parents: Ricky & Lori, Administrative Associate

18-82 TIMOTHY STAMPS

Apartado 2340

Managua

NICARAGUA

Parents: Keith and Penny Stamps, General Evangelism

28-86 MR. ROSS E. FUNDERBURK

01 B.P. 6491

Abijan 01

COTE D'Ivoire (IVORY COAST)

Parents: Ricky & Lori, Administrative Associate

31-82 MR. MARK HENDRICKS

Apartado Postal 969-B

Colonia Zaragoza C P 91910

Vera Cruz Ver

MEXICO

Parents: Larry & Mary, General Evangelism

Take a moment to send a card
to encourage the children
of our missionaries!

JUST FOR THE RECORD



Acteens of New Hebron Church, Lawrence Association

New Hebron Church, Lawrence Association, recently held Acteens Recognition. Acteens (front, from left) are Kathryn Little, Alisha Davis, Callie Walker, Katie McCool, Christy McCloud, Ashley Bridges, Leanne Daughdrill; (back row) Kerri Sutton, Stephanie Presley, Sherri Sutton, Lavern Little, Bethany Little, Kim Westmorland. Cori Walker is not pictured. Jeanine McCloud and Pam Walker, co-teachers.

First Church, Leakesville, will celebrate its 95th anniversary on June 25. Activities include refreshments, 8:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship, 10 a.m.; and lunch in the activities building. Mack C. Strange is pastor.

Smithville Church, Monroe Association, will celebrate its 150th anniversary on July 2. The worship service begins at 10 a.m. with music and speakers. There will be a covered dish meal at noon and the Messengers quartet will be singing in the church sanctuary at 1:30 p.m. Lee Gardner is pastor.

First Church, Grenada, held its GA Recognition Service on May 17. The following girls were recognized for their achievements this year. First row, (from left) Stephanie Branson, Kristen Vance, Ashland King, Cassie Cummings, Raven Woods; (second row) Kayla Williamson, Alex Armstrong, Morgan Amis, Kayla Carson, Katie Boyette,



GAs of First Church, Grenada

Jessica Williams, Whitney Dedmon, Morgan Newman; (third row) Holly Boyette, Kayla Martin, Chatelaine Fortenberry, Jenna McMurphy, Valerye Windham, Mary Katherine Lott, and Anna Carpenter. Jan McMurphy is GA director.

Cross Roads Church, Pelahatchie, held Baby/Child Dedication on May 21. The parents and their children pictured are (front row) Ryan and Mitzi White with Rhanda and Logan Taylor; Rodney and Jan White with Leah Nicole Davis and Jake Elijah; Cliff and Stacy Little with Garrett Middleton; Brian and Keli Hill with Andrew Tompkins; (second row) Chris and Tisha Maddox with Johnathon Dakota; (back row) Tony and Lori Swilley with Heather Elizabeth and Hunter Michael; Andy and Lynn Salers with Macy Katherine and Anna Grace; and Jason and Landy Cordell with Madelyn Raye.



Youth group (pictured) of Faith Church, Oxford, led the evening worship recently and presented the story of Lazarus in sign language and song. Bobby Jones is youth minister and Gerald H. Walker is pastor.

VBS dates

Lighthouse, Richland: June 26-30; 6:30-9 p.m.; graduation, July 2, 5:30 p.m.; pre-registration and kick-off, June 24, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; ages, 3-17; Sammy McDonald, pastor; call (601) 939-2771 for further information.

First, Madison: June 26-30; 8:45 a.m.-12 noon; completed kindergarten-5th grade.

Mississippi Baptist Youth Night

Mississippi Coliseum,
Jackson

Friday, July 14
6:30 - 9:00 p.m.
(One session only)



Greg Matte
Speaker

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

COME AND WORSHIP

BRING YOUR YOUTH

A love offering will be taken.



Chris Tomlin
Worship Leader



Baby dedication at Cross Roads Church, Pelahatchie



Clay Crosse
in concert

Friday July 7, 2000
7:30 p.m.

at
Broadmoor Baptist Church
Madison, MS

with special guest
NICOLE NORDEMAN and
introducing ZOE GIRL

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



Age 3 Mission Friends of First Church, Pascagoula



Age 4-5 Mission Friends of First Church, Pascagoula



GAs of First Church, Pascagoula



RAs of First Church, Pascagoula

First Church, Pascagoula, recently held a Missions Recognition Ceremony. Pictured with their leaders are Mission Friends (age 3); Mission Friends (4-5 years old); GAs (grade 1-6); and RAs (grade 1-6). Rex Yancey is pastor.

Sunflower Church, Sunflower Association, recently had an Appreciation Day honoring the lives of two of its deacons, Jack Griffith who died Dec. 16, 1999, and Joel Parker, Feb. 6, 2000. The family of Parker planted an oak tree in his memory and a tulip tree in memory of Griffith. A plaque honoring their lives was presented to Greg Griffith, son of Jack Griffith, and Nancy Parker, widow of Joel Parker. Pictured (from left) are Greg Griffith; Ed Wood, pastor; and Nancy Parker.



Griffith, Wood, and Parker

Daniel J. Fenn, a senior at Mississippi College and organist at Alta Woods Church, Jackson, will present a concert July 2 at 5:30 p.m. at Alta Wood Church. A fellowship will fol-

low the concert. Fenn is a native of Smithdale and has been a church organist since the age of 12. For more information, contact the church music office at (601) 372-8651.



Bethesda Church, Terry, held dedication ceremonies on May 21 for its new multi-purpose educational facilities. Pictured are members of the building, grounds, and stewardship committees, trustees, and staff. They are (from left) Joe Wood, minister of music; Lester Saranthus; Debbie Rushing; Marty Wilson, pastor; Glenn Taylor; Al Worthy; Jo Bridgers; and A. R. Dulaney; (back row) Trent Bell, minister of youth; Wendell Beverly; Gene Cockrell; Jim Moore; Lydia Parish; Nick Bullard; Martha Hand; Roy Goode; and Frank Dulaney.

Canaan Church, Ashland, celebrated its 160th anniversary on June 4. Homecoming and revival was held June 4-7 to mark the anniversary. Reggie Bridges is pastor.

Park Haven Church, Laurel, will present Kathy Lee in concert, Saturday, July 24, at 7 p.m. Refreshments will be provided in the Family Life Center following the concert.

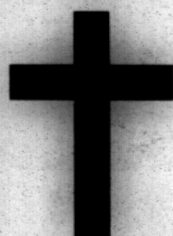
MS POSITIONS AVAILABLE

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER NEEDED. Send resume to: Providence Baptist Church, c/o Dicky Taylor, 301 Fayette Davis Avenue, Cleveland, MS 38732.

BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH, Laurel, Mississippi is seeking to fill the position of Associate Pastor. Duties include administrative tasks for church programs, pastoral duties, and mission

ministries. Send resume to Bethlehem Baptist Church, Attn: Bob Smiley, 838 Reid Road, Laurel, MS 39443.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF COLLEGE STUDENTS needed. Send resume to Morrison Heights Baptist Church, c/o Jennifer Janes, 201 Morrison Drive, Clinton, MS 39056 or fax with cover sheet to 601-924-5622.



PERRY COUNTY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION COUNTY WIDE REVIVAL

June 25-30, 2000

First Baptist Church Runnelstown

Services:

Sunday, June 25:

10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
(Associational Choir 5:30 p.m.)

Monday - Friday, June 26-30

10:00 a.m. (teaching)
7:00 p.m. (service)
(Associational Choir 6:30 p.m.)

with
Dr. Gray Allison
Past president of Mid-America Seminary
Memphis, Tennessee
and
Rev. Boyd Tweedy
Music -

Nursery will be provided for children 3 and under.

GOD'S CALL

Editor:

I read with interest the letter, "Regrets NAMB Action." The writer stated that the North American Mission Board (NAMB) refuses to approve either missionaries or chaplains who have been divorced, regardless of grounds. I know that this has been in effect for missionaries for some time, but now it covers chaplains also.

The writer states that NAMB's restriction would not apply to someone who once had a drinking problem, were sexually loose in their youth, or had other problems in the past. He further states, "only divorce cannot be forgiven, apparently." I know that God forgives the sins mentioned and also divorce. The difference is that a person remains a divorced person while the other sins do not remain.

The writer mentions as "having known some good men of God who were divorced and remarried, who did a good job for the Lord." I feel that doing a good job has nothing to do with the matter under discussion.

The writer states that "a call to the ministry or mission field is something that is between a man and his God." I feel that God does not call a person if the person does not meet scriptural qualifications. God does not contradict his Word, but man does.

James K. Burke
Waynesboro

SUPPORTS NAMB ACTION

Editor:

With respect to, "Regrets NAMB Action," I would like to make several observations. An examination of the term, "one," as used by Paul in 1 Tim. 3:2; 12, with its Greek equivalent, *mia*, reveals that it is speaking of a certain one; a

special, specific one; first one; one of a kind. Certainly not one at a time as interpreted by some. This condition only applied to the office of pastor or deacon. It makes no allowance for divorce.

It can be assumed that this condition would have no bearing on the suitability of a single man for this office (Matt. 19:12b), unless of course he chose to get married. The same would be true in the case of a married man whose first wife has expired. If he later met a Christian lady who had never been married, or who had been and whose husband had expired, if they chose to become married this would not affect his suitability for the office of pastor or deacon. When kept in context, neither Matt. 19:11-12, nor 1 Cor. 7:27-28, can be used to support or justify divorce.

I strongly support the stance of our NAMB. Until our semi-retirement several years ago, my wife and I served as pastoral missionaries through the HMB, now NAMB, for 26 years in the states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New York, and New Jersey. We know the respect that people all across our nation have for the biblical stand for which Southern Baptists have become noted.

Fred N. Jolly
Okolona

NAMB: REVISIT DECISION

Editor:

I wish to respond to J.C. Brady's letter (Regrets NAMB action, June 1 issue) concerning NAMB's refusal to approve missionaries or chaplains who have been divorced, regardless of the grounds.

I experienced unwanted divorce after being called to the

ministry, and was prepared to "serve on the sidelines" as a result. However, God reminded me that he had begun the work in me (Phil. 1:6) and he would be responsible for continuing to perform his work of ministry through me. He also assured me that "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29 NASB). As I rested in his promises, doors of ministry opened...and I can testify that he has kept his promise. To my surprise and to his glory, I have not missed even one Sunday in official ministry capacity, and continue to this day.

I am thankful that there are those who are open minded enough to allow God to continue his work even through wounded soldiers. I treasure every ministry opportunity.

I feel the NAMB should revisit their decision in light of the need to be redemptive both to the lost world and to those who find themselves in similar situations.

Doug Warren, pastor
Shiloh Church, Vaiden

WHICH FLAG OFFENSIVE?

Editor:

As a life long Mississippian whose ancestry includes both Mississippi Indians and Confederate veterans, I read with great interest Charles E. Poole's letter in which he called for a change in the current Mississippi state flag.

If my reading of Poole's letter was correct, his call for changing the state flag was based upon the belief that the "Stars and Bars" section offends people of color by constantly reminding them that some 140 years ago their ancestors were slaves, and that slavery implied racial inferiority.

If that is the case, I hope Poole will join me in calling for a change in the present American

flag. My reasoning is simple. As I have stated, some of my ancestors were Mississippi Indians. Under the American flag the white man broke their treaties, stole their tribal lands, and subsequently drove them from Mississippi to Oklahoma during the infamous "Trail of Tears."

There is not a prudent Mississippian around who doesn't feel deep down in his/her heart of hearts that it is just a matter of time before the Mississippi state flag is changed. The current flag is too "politically incorrect" to endure, but we also feel that its replacement will not come about because Mississippi Baptists are motivated by the highest principle of "look not to our own interests, but to the interests of others." Our flag will be changed because the politicians will be motivated by the lowest principle of all, that being to seek their own best political interests.

Randy W. Kolb
Pontotoc

SEEKING INFORMATION

Editor:

Heritage Baptist Church in Annapolis, Maryland, is seeking information on any students who will be attending the United States Naval Academy this year. Contact me at Heritage Baptist Church, 1740 Forest Drive, Annapolis, MD 21401, if you know of someone who will be attending the academy.

Henry Green, pastor
Annapolis, Maryland

SHOULD GENDER MATTER?

Editor:

Southern Baptists have always been a practical people, especially regarding our interpretation of Scripture. When most of the world was abolishing slavery, we stood firm on biblical principal and the practical realities of our Southern economy and kept our slaves according to then-sound biblical interpretation.

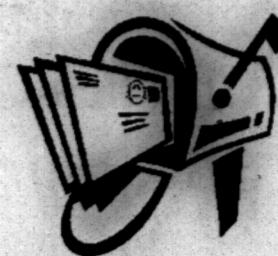
When faced with the Pauline insistence that a woman's head be covered in worship, we stand firm on our exegesis and the practical reality that Southern Baptist women don't want to cover their heads in worship.

So now, given our penchant for biblical-ity and practicality, I am somewhat perplexed about what our beloved convention is saying in the updated Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M).

Anne Graham Lotz and Beth Moore are two of the finest preachers in our day. Biblically, the issue can be as thorny as slavery and female head-coverings.

It is sad that in the next generation or so, some little Southern Baptist girl will have the gifts of Lotz and Moore, and the only place for her to exercise those gifts in her local community will be in somebody else's church.

So why exactly are we bothering with gender in the BF&M?
Richard Green
Laurel



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

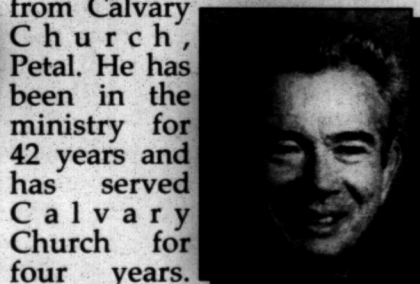
STAFF CHANGES

Arnold Davis Sr. retired from full time pastor after serving for 37 years. He will continue as chaplain for Stahome Hospice for Winston and eight outer surrounding

counties of the area. Beginning June 1 he will be available for pulpit supply, interim revivals, and seminars. He may be contacted at (662) 773-8421.

John L. Jones, pastor of Faith Church, Silver Creek, for over nine years, retired April 30 due to health problems.

David E. Shofner retired from Calvary Church, Petal. He has been in the ministry for 42 years and has served Calvary Church for four years. Shofner's retirement will be effective Aug. 1.



Shofner

Wayne Miley has resigned as pastor of Short Creek, Yazoo Association, effective June 28. Miley is a graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as pastor in Scott and Newton counties, and as the director of admissions at Clarke College, Newton.

REVIVAL DATES

Pleasant Grove, Gore Springs: June 25-30; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; different evangelist each night; Neal Gant, pastor, music.

Shiloh (Marion): June 25-28; Sunday, 11 a.m. followed by lunch, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; James Messer, Alabama, evangelist; James Bell, North Columbia, music; Mack Carney, pastor.

First, Laurel: June 25-28; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; weekday noon lunches and Bible study in the Family Life Center gym; Sonny Adkins, director of evangelism,

Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, evangelist; Joe Estes, Albany, Ga., music; Randall W. Turner, pastor.

Weathersby, Mendenhall: June 25-28; Sunday, 11 a.m., afternoon service following lunch; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; James Smith, D'Lo, guest speaker; Donald Walker, Magee, music; Foy Killingsworth, pastor.

Harperville, Harperville: June 25-29; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Thurs., 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Randall Creel, evangelist; Travis Watkins, music; Parkes Marler, interim pastor.

Arsonist torches Ga. SBC church

GAINESVILLE, Ga. (BP) — A \$10,000 reward has been offered for information leading to the arrest of an arsonist who burned down a Southern Baptist church building in the north Georgia town of Gainesville.

Investigators said someone broke into the Montgomery Memorial Church in the early morning hours of June 4 and torched the sanctuary. Officials determined the fire started in the pastor's office shortly after midnight.

Firefighters were able to save an adjoining education building, but the sanctuary was a total loss, according to Fulton Boswell, pastor of the 1,150 member congregation.

Boswell said the church was insured. Officials placed damage estimates at about \$700,000.

Merritt elected SBC president in Orlando

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP) — Former Mississippi pastor James G. Merritt, presently senior pastor of First Church, Snellville, Ga., was elected without opposition to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) presidency June 13 during the SBC annual meeting in Orlando.

Merritt previously served as pastor of First Church, Laurel.

Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Church, Pensacola, Fla., was elected first vice president, defeating Brad Hoffman, pastor of First Church, Tusculawilla, Fla.

Tommy French, pastor of Jefferson Church, Baton Rouge, La., defeated Paul Russell, pastor of Sundridge Church, Sebring, Fla., for second vice president.

John Yeats, editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger, and Lee Porter, a retiree from Georgia, were re-elected as recording secretary and registration secretary, respectively.

"I am humbled and overwhelmed that God has brought me to this responsibility," said Merritt. "I covet the prayers of my Southern Baptist family



NEW SBC OFFICERS — Newly elected officers of the Southern Baptist Convention are (left to right): John Yeats, Oklahoma, recording secretary; Tommy French, Louisiana, second vice president; James Merritt, Georgia, president; Ted Traylor, Florida, first vice president; and Lee Porter, Georgia, registration secretary. Officers were elected as the SBC convened for its annual meeting June 13-14 in Orlando's Orange County Convention Center. (Photo by Van Payne)

that I would lead with the distinction and wisdom of my predecessors."

Merritt is the third-youngest SBC president and the first baby boomer elected to the SBC presidency.

A Georgia native, Merritt has been pastor of the 12,000-member suburban Atlanta church since 1985. During his tenure the

congregation has baptized 7,826 people and seen average Sunday School attendance grow from 800 to 3,250. In 1999, the congregation gave approximately \$300,000 to the Cooperative Program (CP), about 5% of undesignated giving, associate pastor Dan Greer said. CP is the SBC's unified channel for missions and ministry support. Merritt has also

garnering 1,102 votes.

Yeats, elected to his fourth term as recording secretary, is editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger. Earlier, he served as editor of the Indiana Baptist and as a pastor.

Porter, a retired pastor and denominational employee, is in his 24th year as registration secretary.

served as president of the SBC Executive Committee and the SBC Pastors' Conference.

At Olive Church where Traylor is pastor, about 3,000 people attend Sunday morning worship. The congregation baptized 309 people in 1999 and gave \$600,000 (11% of undesignated receipts) to the Cooperative Program. Messengers cast 3,054 ballots for Traylor to 892 for Hoffman.

French's church, which he helped to establish in 1958, has helped to start at least four other congregations. About 700 people participate in Sunday morning worship. The congregation contributes 10 % of undesignated offerings to CP. Messengers cast 1,349 votes for French, with Russell

Rankin exhorts messengers to reach lost world

ORLANDO, Fla. (Special) — More than 2,000 ethno-linguistic peoples of the world — 1.7 billion people — "have never

heard of Jesus. They don't even know the light exists. They have never heard that name," declared Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board (IMB), during the June 13 evening session of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Orlando.

They are "condemned to an eternity in torment and darkness," he added.

Rankin reported on the work of the IMB, which also was presented with a banner procession, music, drama, video, and testimonies of Southern Baptists from many walks of life. The IMB needs partners in "God's worldwide harvest," he said.

In the banner procession, the unreached people groups were represented with plain gray flags rather than the ornate banners.

"They may be bowing down before Hindu idols or images of Buddha. They may be zealously declaring that Allah is their God and Mohammed is their prophet. They may live a lifetime in fear and superstition," described Rankin. More than 50,000 people die each day without Christ, he added.

"Never before has a changing world provided a greater opportunity for fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord

than now as we enter the 21st century," he stated.

The responsibility to reach the lost is the responsibility of every Christian, not just that of missionaries, said Rankin.

He thanked Southern Baptists who have given more than \$100 million to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions over the past three years; sent more international missionaries (which total 4,900) the last seven years; increased the number of mission points from 22,000 two years ago to 38,000 last year; baptized almost 1,000 new believers a day or 363,700 last year; and sent more short-term volunteers (25,744 last year).

Rankin suggested Southern Baptist entities, not just the IMB, also share in the responsibility to reach people who don't know about Jesus Christ.

Among the SBC leaders affirming the involvement of their entities in international missions were:

- Morris Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville.
- Jimmy Draper, president of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.
- Janet Hoffman, president of the Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham.

- Bob Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board in Atlanta.

- Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Seminary in New Orleans (representing the Southern Baptist seminaries).

- Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

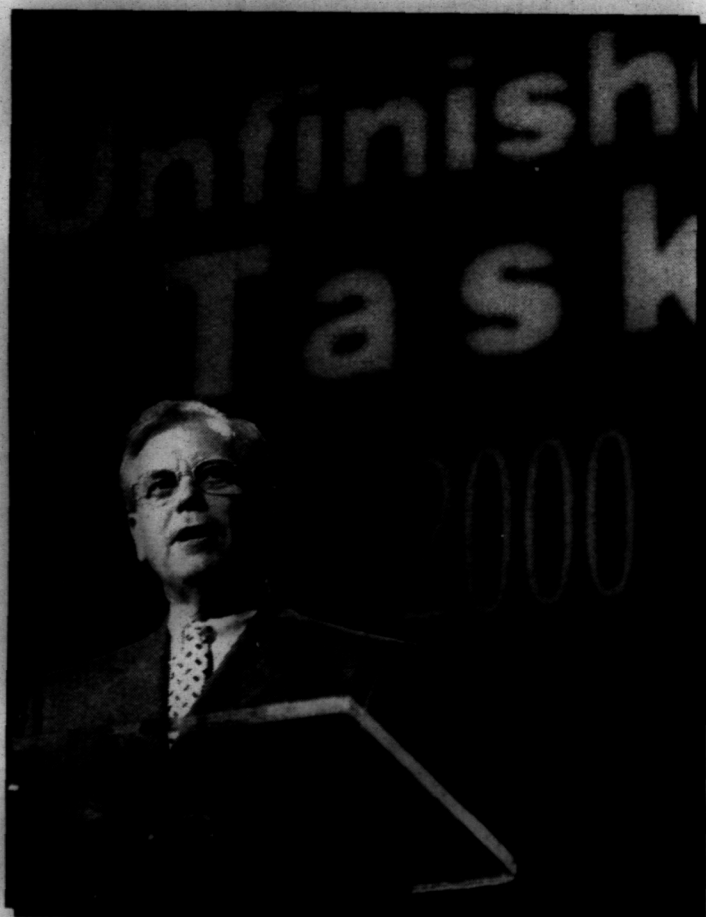
- O. S. Hawkins, president of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas.

- Robert White, executive director of the Georgia Baptist Convention in Atlanta (representing the state Baptist conventions).

Amaro da Silva Vianna, executive secretary, Para State Convention, Brazil, thanked the IMB for 100 years of work by missionaries there.

Finally, several Southern Baptists told of their involvement in international missions, including:

- Stan Gillcash, New York pastor.
- Libby Holder, First Church, Orlando.
- Bethany Nobles, Florida State University.
- Claire Roberson, high school student of Chesapeake, Va.
- Helen Yates, president, Florida Woman's Missionary Union.



MISSIONS REPORT — Native Mississippian Jerry Rankin, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board, presents his annual report to the SBC June 13 at Orlando's Orange County Convention Center. (Photo by Kent Harville)

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Characteristics of believers: Joy

Philippians 4:4-20

By Juanita West

Surely Paul must have sung a song similar to, "I've got the joy, joy, joy, down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart..." His epistle to the Philippian church reverberates with the message of everlasting, abiding joy that comes to us through our personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Exceptional joy (vv. 4-7). Our spirits also soar when we sing the praise chorus based on the words of Paul in verse 4: "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice." As we sing this praise round, our hearts seem to swell and burst

with joy, joy that is based on a deeper commitment in life.

Paul once again leads the Philippian Christians to realize that joy is not based on events in their lives but is found in the solid foundation of Christ's presence. Even in the difficult and unpleasant times of our lives, we still have joy. Nothing can take away the joy we have in Christ; therefore, we should rejoice and be glad.

The presence of joy in the believer's life may not be outwardly evident, but the believer's reaction to situations in life will testify to the joy. Paul admonishes the



West

Philippians to "Let your gentleness be known to all men" (v. 5). Our reactions to circumstances should be calm and should show consideration of others. Paul encourages their "gentleness" not only out of honor to living in the mind of Christ, but also out of recognition

that the Lord could return at any moment. Our lives should prove worthy. Paul reminds the Philippians not to fret about the circumstances in their lives, but to offer up prayer and thanksgiving as a testimony to their faith in God. Their lives then will be filled with the peace that comes from a closer walk with God (vv. 6-7).

Enriching virtues (vv. 8-9). In these verses, Paul provides a catalog of standards by which the Philippian Christians should live: "true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of

good report" (v. 8, NKJ). After reminding them that they had already learned much about these virtues, Paul instructs the Philippians to follow after his example (v. 9).

Exemplary partnership (vv. 10-14). Despite the influences of the world to be self-made, we, like Paul, know that our needs and wants are met through Christ Jesus our Lord. Other Christian people are often the instruments Christ uses to meet those needs. That had been Paul's case with the Philippian church. Through God's direction in their lives, the Philippians gave gifts to Paul to help meet his needs so he could continue in the kingdom work. Paul thanks them for their gracious gifts and for their desire to support him (v. 10). He expresses great joy in their actions. Yet, he tells them that regardless of his circumstances in life, whether physically sustained or in need, that he had learned "to be content"

(v. 11). His faith sustained him in all areas of his life. How wonderful when we, like Paul, can truly say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (v. 13, NKJ).

Effective gifts (vv. 14-18). Paul reminds the Philippian church of how generous they have been in meeting his needs and coming to his aid on his missionary journeys (vv. 15-16). As a result of the gifts the Philippians had sent by Epaphroditus, Paul was able to continue in his witnessing and preaching (v. 18). Paul assures the Philippians that they, too, will share in any fruit that results from his work because of their faithful partnership with him (v. 17).

God desires our gifts as a testament of our faith in him. That which we joyously give to God should be "a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God" (v. 18).

West is a member of Calvary Church, Newton.

LIFE AND WORK

God's good creation

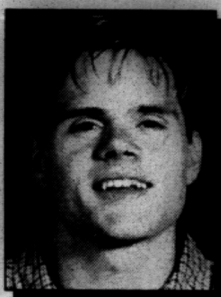
Genesis 1:1-31

By Matt Loving

What kind of world did God create? Many people today view the biblical record of God's creation as a myth. Even many Christians do not honestly or seriously consider the biblical account as the final answer. In the letter to the Colossians, Paul boldly proclaimed in chapter 1 verses 16-18 that all things were created by God and for him, and that he holds all things together. Believers who are willing to trust God and his Word find that he created the world as a good place, orderly in nature, with abundant resources to sustain and supply the needs of his crea-

tures. This lesson's focus is on the creation as it came from God and was originally intended to be as found in the Genesis account.

An orderly creation (vv. 3, 14-15). These verses reveal to us that God created day, night, and the seasons to provide order. God did not create out of whim or caprice. Where is the hope in that kind of thinking? People should see God's order in the dependability of day, night, and the seasons. People can hope and plan for a better future because they live in a world that is not the result of random events. This is an essential part of placing our



Loving

faith in God and knowing our hope is in him.

An abundant creation (vv. 11-12, 20-22, 24-25). God's power, creativity, and generosity are displayed in these passages. We can be reminded of these aspects of God as we view the abundant variety of plants and wildlife in creation.

Furthermore, we can have a deeper reverence and appreciation for the creation and the Creator, the one who called it good. The truths of God's handiwork as evidenced in these verses can lead us into another aspect of faith in him — we can trust that he will do even more incredible things in our lives as we place our faith daily in him.

Grudem wrote that "the positive side of the fact that God created the universe out of

nothing is that it has meaning and a purpose. God, in his wisdom, created it for something. We should try to understand that purpose and use creation in ways that fit that purpose, namely, to bring glory to God himself" (Systematic Theology, p. 264).

A sustaining creation (vv. 29-30). After God created people, he gave them and the creatures vegetation as food to sustain them. His creative work provided sustenance for his creatures. This truth can help people have assurance in God's provision, knowing that God's creation is ample to sustain them. This should also serve as a reminder that apart from God, we can produce nothing and are nothing. It is he who gives all things and the abilities to produce (Deut. 8:17-18).

A good creation (v. 31). After finishing his work, God viewed

all of his creation and called it "very good." This is the final answer! Since God views creation as good, people can express gratitude to God for his good creation. In those times when you feel as if you have nothing to thank God for, his creation can be a starting point. As you view his handiwork and see his consistency, you can also learn to rest in his promises to be even more faithful to you. Seeing God's creation as good will cause you to adjust your worldview lenses to see reality as God defines it. Oswald Chambers once wrote that "I can never find reality by looking within; the only way I can get at reality is by dumping myself on to someone else, namely, God. As soon as I do I am brought in touch with reality" (Conformed To His Image, p. 31).

Loving is minister of youth at Oak Hill Church, Poplarville.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Assurance for the saved

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-17

By Tommy Bufkin

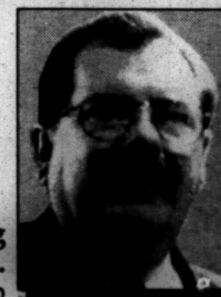
She was tired. Bent by osteoporosis, her body was just worn out. Ninety one years of hard work, illness, loss, and heartache weighed heavy upon her. She looked up and whispered, "I am tired. I just want to go home." She was in her physical home but everyone knew what she meant. She wanted to go to her reward, her heavenly home. Long ago she had put her trust in her Lord to save and keep her.

Life is a struggle even for believers, but they have the assurance of God's presence, provision, and protection. They know their eternal security and reward are sure.

Assurance during trying times (vv. 2-4).

The worthy Lamb breaks the seals on the scroll and terrible catastrophes are revealed in chapter six. Many believers are martyred. Interpreters differ widely on the "when" of the breaking of these seals. Did this happen in the past? Does it happen concurrently with the history of the church? Or is it entirely future connected with the end of time? Whichever interpretation is accepted, there is a message for believers now.

Chapter seven presents an interlude before the seventh seal is broken. Here is a word of assurance for believers that they were secure even in the face of such judgments.



Bufkin

Four angels restrain the forces of evil represented by winds until the people of God are secure. Another angel brings the seal of God. Hot wax was put on a piece of property and a ring with mark of the owner was pressed into it to show ownership and authenticity. This seal was an assurance of God's presence, provision, and protection during this terrible time. Apparently the seal is it the name of God (14:1).

Some interpreters see the 144,000 as a special group of saved Jews, while others believe the number is symbolic of all the redeemed of all ages.

God is with his people. He moves to empower and protect them during difficult times.

Assurance for eternity (vv. 9-17). Some have equated the 144,000 and the "great multitude." There is certainly a difference in their location. This

enumerable host is in heaven. Their white robes symbolize victory and purity. The palm branches also indicate a celebration of victory.

The saved ones give all the credit for their salvation to the actions of God in Christ. It comes from the act of redemptive love manifested on the cross. The statement is in the present tense. Salvation becomes complete when the believer is delivered out of this world of sin and trouble, into the presence of God.

The angels of heaven are depicted as surrounding the throne, the living creatures, and the elders. At the declaration of salvation, they worship God with essentially the same song of praise (5:13).

An elder asks John directly who these are. He either does not know or is reluctant to name them. The elder then give three things that identify them and four rewards.

They have come out of the

intense tribulation that will come in the end times before the Lord comes back. Their trial will be terrible but they will emerge victorious.

They have been saved by the death of the Lamb. As clothes wash in soap, they have been made clean in the blood of the Lamb. They have the special place before the throne. They have immediate access to God.

The suffering of the faithful pale beside the reward that is to be theirs. God himself will pitch his tent (dwell) with them.

They will have everything they need. Hunger, thirst, and hot sun seem to refer to the sufferings of Israel in the wilderness. The faithful will enjoy eternal provisions.

Christ himself will protect them and satisfy every spiritual longing, the springs of living water. They will have joy forever as God himself takes away their tears of sorrow.

Bufkin is pastor of Mt. Zion Church, Rankin Association.

SBC pastors cautioned to lead clean lives

ORLANDO, Fla. (Special) — Pastors were encouraged during the annual SBC Pastors Conference to sow and reap a spiritual harvest in their personal lives, homes, churches, and world.

Jim Henry said personal holiness requires Christians to walk closely with God so that they are morally alert and others can see Christ through them.

"Our holy God calls for us, a holy people, to engage our society so that they might see the difference between light and day," said Henry, pastor of First Church, Orlando.

God requires holiness of His followers, Henry noted. "Being a child of God, we must bear the family resemblance."

He encouraged pastors to trust God to take care of them. "If God has called you to a place, God will provide your needs."

Pastors face two major challenges to their personal holiness, Henry said — materialism and lust. He noted a poll result that more than 25% of pastors admitted to inappropriate sexual conduct.

He said he was impressed by Billy Graham's prayer asking God to kill him before he was unfaithful to his wife. Henry said that when he told his wife he had prayed the same thing, "She said, 'Don't worry, I'll kill you first.'"

Hayes Wicker, pastor of First Church of Naples, Fla., said the Christian world view is under attack from postmodernism, which teaches that absolute truth doesn't exist.

This view is resulting in persecutions of Christians from those who preach tolerance. "The storm clouds are gathering, and unless we turn our culture around, the storm will break in around us."

Orlando evangelist Jay Strack stressed the need for Christians to focus on God's vision for their lives. "No idea that you or I could conceive could outshine the personal vision God has for you."

Strack said a biblical vision will change how a Christian sees God, how a Christian sees himself or herself, and how a Christian sees others.

"We need a fresh vision of the Holy One of Israel, of ourselves and of other people.

How do we see other people?"

Jerry Vines said the Holy Spirit is a vital participant in the work of evangelism, but Christians also have a responsibility. "God has given us an assignment — we're to go," said Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville. "We have a wonderful Savior to present to a lost world."

Kenn Whitten, pastor of Idlewild Church, C h u r c h , First Church, Stuart, Fla. Officers were elected June 12 during the annual Tampa, Fla., Pastor's Conference meeting, held June 11-12 at Orlando's Orange County Convention Center. (Photo by Bill Bangham)

He compared modern America to the Judges 2 description of "a generation that knew not God."

"We have more broken homes, more broken hearts, and more broken hopes than any generation in history," Whitten said.

Referring to the major auto manufacturers approving benefits to partners of same-sex relationships, he stated that we are living in a day that has redefined family.

"We as Southern Baptists need to stand up and defend the family," Whitten said. "The Cleavers do not live here any more." He urged Christians to build a counter culture rather than live in a parallel culture.

James Merritt, pastor of First Church, Snellville, Ga., spoke on a father's faithfulness, based on Deuteronomy 6.



NEW PASTOR'S CONFERENCE OFFICERS — New officers of the Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference are (left to right): Bob Parker, secretary/treasurer, First Church, Markham Woods, Lake Mary, Fla.; Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville; and Darrell Orman, president, Ridgecrest Church, Dothan, Ala.; and Darrell Orman, C h u r c h , First Church, Stuart, Fla. Officers were elected June 12 during the annual Tampa, Fla., Pastor's Conference meeting, held June 11-12 at Orlando's Orange County Convention Center. (Photo by Bill Bangham)

"Every daddy needs to be a hero to his children," Merritt said. "God holds fathers responsible for the destiny of their families."

Merritt noted that even though Eve sinned first, God went to Adam first because he was the spiritual leader of the home. He suggested five lessons God gave to fathers in ancient Israel to raise a holy family: invite your children to receive the Lord, inspire your children to revere the Lord, influence your children to reverence the Lord, instruct your children to reflect the Lord, and invoke your children to walk with the Lord.

"You cannot teach what you do not live," he said. "You can take your children to church every Sunday, but if you don't live it on Monday your influence will mean nothing."

Intimacy with God yields influence, Bright says

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP) — Intimacy with God will allow

of faith as they seek to influence their world.

"I've learned from experience that God's presence can be

lost by a lack of prayer and lack of spending time with him," Bright said. "Many people in leadership, even pastors and pastors' wives, are trying to live in their own strength, trying to maintain this Christian life without really giving priority to the Lord and priority to prayer."

"When I let the pressure of work rob me of time with God, I am revealing my lack of dependence on him," she said.

"Defeat and failure are due to the loss of God's presence," Bright cautioned. "Ask God to reveal if there is sin in your life preventing that presence; then confess it and return to your first love. Joy in the Holy Spirit is preserved only by our daily fellowship with God."

"When we have fellowship with Jesus Christ, we receive heavenly grace every day," she said. "We receive inspiration, energy, motivation, strength, endurance, (and) confidence..."

you to be women of influence," Vonette Bright, wife of Bill Bright and co-founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, told nearly 1,200 Southern Baptist ministers' wives at a June 13 luncheon on the first day of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Orlando, Fla.

Speaking on the 45th annual Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference theme, "Women of Influence," Bright said joy in intimacy with God and in walking in God's Spirit leads to godly influence.

"Experiencing God's presence is the greatest privilege of the believer. It comes from time spent in his Word and in daily prayer," she said.

An internationally known speaker and author, Bright currently directs Women Today, a radio and resource ministry that encourages women to take the next step



MINISTERS' WIVES MEET — Vonette Bright (right) begins to address the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference, assisted by Joyce Rogers, president of the Ministers' Wives Fellowship. The conference and luncheon were held June 13 at Orlando's Omni Rosen Hotel, adjacent to the Orange County Convention Center, site of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting. (Photo by Gibbs Frazeur)

Bibliocipher

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DEZ NRT OHPLPN OHT-
GVTNR TMHLTOOBX,
NRGN PD NRT BGNNTL
NPCTO OECT ORGBB
WTHGLN YLEC NRT
YGPNR, APJPD RTTW NE
OTWISPD OHPLPNO,
GDW WESNLPD TO EY
WTJPBO.
YPLON NPCENRX YEIL: EDT

Clue: L = R

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Revelation Three: Twenty.